

Video-based Instruction and Students' Perception of Cultural Understanding and Motivation in the Chinese Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract

This paper reports on a study, which investigates the effects of video-based and text-based instruction on students' perception of cultural understanding and learning motivation in the Chinese foreign language classroom. It explores students' opinions of the use of different teaching tools, both video and textual materials, and their effects on the retention of cultural aspects. The study included 42 high school Chinese foreign language students in Italy. One group of participants was exposed to video-based instruction, and the control group to text-based instruction. Data were collected using a pre- and a post-questionnaire on students' evaluation of cultural understanding, motivation and the efficacy of the learning tools; content questions were also used to investigate students' cultural retention. Results of two groups were then compared. The findings confirm that video-based instruction is perceived as more effective and more motivating than written text. In particular, video-based material is more successful in facilitating understanding of a foreign culture and helps enhancement of students' cultural proficiency. The results of the present investigation, on the one hand, contribute to the research on the effectiveness of the employment of video as a teaching

tool, focusing on the specific field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language; on the other hand, support teachers and textbook authors to incorporate video-based instructions as effective tools for the promotion of language acquisition in classroom activities and teaching materials.

Keywords: Chinese as a foreign language, foreign language teaching, motivation, teaching culture, Video-based instruction.

1 INTRODUCTION

The rapid increase in the study of Chinese globally, both language and culture, in recent years, is due to the economic development of China itself (Li, 2015). This growing interest has made evident the needs and difficulties of foreign students learning Chinese. Studies have evidenced that learning Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) is perceived as more challenging than learning any one European language (Stevens, 2006; Gabbianelli & Formica, 2017; Yang & Medwell, 2017). These studies reveal that this perception of the difficulties is more common at elementary level. This is due to the fact that the majority of students approach the study of Chinese with no previous knowledge of the language. The studies also indicate that this perception of the level of difficulty produces a feeling of frustration and it contributes to reducing motivation in the study of Chinese (Stevens, 2006). This difficulty seems to be due mainly to the characteristics of Chinese and to the perceived distance between L1 and foreign language (FL) cultures (Gabbianelli & Formica, 2017). In order to facilitate the understanding of the Chinese background and reduce the perception of distance and difficulty, what is needed is research into suitable teaching methods. Culture included in the FL curriculum is of fundamental importance not only because with no knowledge of the target culture there is no foundation on which to base the language learning, but also because this will prevent frustration. Cultural teaching is an essential part of foreign language teaching, it helps learners to understand FL context and to use FL appropriately to communicate with native speakers. Focus on cultural aspects is particularly important in the FL classroom; in this learning context it is in class that students experience the FL thanks to the teaching aids and activities proposed. This is also the case of students in Italy, where the numbers of such students are growing, especially in high school where Chinese courses have been officially included in the curriculum in recent years (Langé, 2018). Investigating student perception of cultural understanding, and teaching tools used to introduce the culture is important for the planning of teaching processes adapted to learners'

needs and to limit a drop in motivation.

This research aims to investigate the effects of video-based and text-based instruction on students' perception of cultural understanding and learning motivation in the Chinese FL classroom in Italy. It explores students' opinions of the use of different teaching tools, both video and textual materials, and their effects on the retention of cultural aspects presented: the Chinese school system and traditional Chinese martial arts. The study included 42 high school Chinese FL students in Italy. Students were divided in two groups, according to the different tool used to teach culture in each group. One group was introduced to cultural content using video material, the other group using textual material. Data were, then, collected using a pre- and a post-questionnaire on their evaluation of cultural understanding, motivation and the efficacy of the learning tools. Results are then discussed to draw preliminary conclusions. Future investigations are necessary to discuss some points of conclusions that can be drawn from this study.

1.1 Culture in the FL learning

According to an action-oriented teaching approach, the purpose of language learning is to communicate using the FL in real life contexts. Native speakers in every-day life use the language to express values, behaviours, customs, beliefs, etc., language is shaped by this varying system of shared behaviour of interactive groups. Therefore, foreign language teaching is considered inseparable and strongly related to the cultural teaching. The purpose of teaching cultural elements in FL classrooms is to improve the FL ability of students and developing their knowledge of using language appropriately when communicating with native speakers. Furthermore, cultural teaching may strengthen motivation and facilitate the perception of FL use in real-life situations.

To this end, the cultural knowledge of a target language is considered as an integral part of FL teaching (Damen, 1987; Kramsch, 1993, 1997; Seelye, 1993). Firstly, cultural knowledge is considered important to support the intercultural

learning process. Kramersch (1993) claims that cultural consciousness is as important as the other language skills “If.....language is seen as social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching. Cultural awareness must then be viewed as enabling language proficiency.....Culture in language teaching is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing” (1993, p. 27). This principle is clearly defined by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001), which, adopting an action-oriented approach, considers language users and learners “as ‘social agents’, members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action” (CEFR, 2001, p. 9).

The importance of including cultural elements in FL teaching has also been considered in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language (Zhang, 1988; Zhu, 2010). Wang (2006) highlighted the need to plan a Chinese curriculum, to include culture and decide which cultural elements to teach. This recognised relationship between culture and language in FL learning has later been included in the *International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education* (2008). The document, used as a basis to plan the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language the world over, includes a specific cultural section describing those elements of the culture to be taught at each level of competence. However, Scrimgeour & Wilson (2009) have made clear that in this document culture is an “additional optional component” and that communicative competence and cultural elements are treated separately.

The lack of a holistic teaching approach that integrates culture in language teaching has also been observed in the work of some teachers. Researches on Australian-Chinese teachers’ activities found that educators still give little attention to socio-pragmatic concepts necessary for suitable interaction in the FL (Orton, 2010), and express discomfort at the idea of introducing cultural elements (Moloney, 2013).

The role of language textbooks is also important. Although cultural contents have begun to be included in FL textbooks, how they should be presented is still a topic of research. Chinese FL textbooks generally present cultural elements, such as food, festivals, legends, etc., however these are introduced decontextualized, and presented with no reference to Chinese perspectives or ways of thinking, for instance which elements are connected to specific cultural values (Myers, 2000; Tang, 2006; Yu, 2009).

A second important role of culture in FL teaching is its effectiveness in promoting motivation for learning (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). Language researchers and educational psychologists have long documented the importance of motivation in language acquisition, attitude and motivation are considered central factors in language learning (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 2007). Scholars describe two major orientation categories in second language learning: integrative orientation, which indicates learners' interest in the culture and community of the target language; and instrumental orientation, which refers to functional interests, such as using the target language for travel, for obtain a job, etc. (Gardner, 2007). In recent decades, has become influent the L2 Motivational Self System theory developed by Dörnyei (2009) which uses psychological theories of the self to develop three constituents: the Ideal L2 self, the Ought-to L2 self and the L2 Learning experience self; such theory has been used as a framework to examine L2 learning motivation.

Some researchers have also explored the role of digital technology in the language learning process. Henry and Lamb (2020) have investigated interrelations between language learning and technology; they pointed out that “digitalization of learning can have positive effects on motivation” (Henry & Lamb, 2020, p. 21).

Moloney and Xu (2014, 2020) investigated motivational orientations and learning needs of Chinese heritage language learners in Australia. The authors found that learners' goals for learning Chinese include cultural identity and communicative competence and that choosing to learn Chinese is “balanced by the

forward-looking accumulation of cultural and economic capital as members of the globalized Chinese-speaking communities of the future” (Moloney & Xu, 2014, p. 387).

Wen (2011) observed the motivation of Chinese heritage language students and non-heritage language students, and found that the latter are more interested in Chinese culture and in communicative activities, while Chinese heritage language students are more interested in writing and reading. The research recommends integrating cultural activities in the Chinese FL class to maintain motivation and help students to understand Chinese culture.

The effectiveness of culture in promoting motivation for learning has great significance in the FL context, where a major opportunity that students have to be introduced to FL culture is during lessons, when they take part in activities offered by teachers. As evidenced by Wen (2018) “Regardless of their ethnic and socio-cultural differences, they have the desire to learn Chinese culture and be friends with Chinese people (*integrativeness*)” (2018, p. 367). Recent studies of motivation in Chinese learning have shown that students have a variety of motives, although extrinsic motivation prevails, intrinsic interests in Chinese language and culture played an important role (Gao, 2014; Wen, 2018; Romagnoli, 2019).

Romagnoli (2019) investigated motivation of high school Italian learners of Chinese. The study confirmed that the choice of study Chinese is driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and recommends adjusting teaching methods according to learners’ interests, such as integrating visual stimuli and authentic material, videos and pictures, for learners motivated by intrinsic interests (Romagnoli, 2019, p. 73).

Furthermore, Wen (2018) suggests investigating the interaction between motivation, learning experience and instructional motivational strategies. Due to the “gap between learners’ expectations of the learning task and their leaning outcome” (2018, p. 369), motivation may vary and decrease, therefore is fundamental to investigate learning situation and individual motivation, in order to

understand how motivation can be better enhanced.

1.2 Using video to teach culture in the FL classroom

In order to provide students with real life, authentic language experiences that take place in the FL cultural context, video represents an extremely effective teaching tool. It gives access to images, where FL speakers perform authentic interactive communications in real contextualized situation which students could not otherwise get access (Pegrum, 2008; Kambara, 2011).

A number of studies have been carried out to measure the effectiveness of using videos in FL classes for different language skills. For example, Herron et al. (2006) examined the effects of a story-based programme on the improvement in their language of two groups of intermediate-level French students. One group was exposed to story-based video instruction and the other to story-based textual instruction. Authors found that only the group, which received video instruction, improved their listening skill, and that despite the fact that both groups improved in their grammar competence, better scores were obtained by students that had been exposed to story-based video instruction.

Wang (2008) investigated the effects of video in learning Chinese vocabulary with students at different levels. Results show that subtitles used in video have positive effects on vocabulary learning, and that students' interest increases when they recognize characters in subtitles.

In an area of research that has investigated the effectiveness of video to teach FL culture, studies have demonstrated that using video is effective in creating recognition of cultural elements (Martinez-Gibson, 1998) and in retention of cultural information as well (Hanley, Herron, & Cole, 1995; Herron & Hanley, 1992).

Herron et al. (1999) studied the effectiveness of a video-based language programme for elementary level French learners. Results of a comprehension test reveal a general improvement in FL cultural knowledge. Results of an opinion

questionnaire exploring students' perceptions of how much they thought they had learned of the FL culture show that students perceived they had positively improved their FL cultural knowledge, in particular learning FL cultural behaviours. A second study of Herron et al. (2000) observed specifically learners "with no or virtually no prior experience in French", and, as well as in the previous research, they found that novice students also improved their cultural knowledge through exposure to an instructional video. The study also explored students' perception of the amount of culture they had learned and results indicate that students believed they had improved their cultural awareness, confirming the previous findings and concluding that "video seems to have a propensity to emphasize cultural patterns of living in the FL classroom in a realistic, lively manner". Finally, results of a third research on this topic by Herron et al. (2002) indicated that videos are an effective way to assess cultural proficiency.

Not many studies have been conducted on teaching and learning about Chinese culture through video-based material. Zhang (2011) focuses the research on the use of film clips in the foreign language classroom to develop student's intercultural competence. The author provides example activities to introduce Chinese perspectives to FL students. She used discourse in 3 minutes film clips to teach students cultural awareness and to help them explore Chinese cultural thoughts. Zhang (2013) examined the learning of Chinese culture by exposing a group of British secondary school-students of Chinese FL to two film sessions. She investigated students' attitudes to motivation, cultural understanding and the importance of language study. Results indicate that the exposure to films increased the positive attitude of students to the employment of film as a teaching tool in language study. The study also indicated that students agreed that their cultural understanding of Chinese culture and level of motivation had increased. However the perception of the importance of language study wasn't influenced by exposition to films. This research confirms that including films in the FL Chinese lesson has positive effects on understanding Chinese culture.

Finally, studies investigated students' perspectives on the use of video to improve their learning. Choi and Johnson (2005) exposed American university students to two types of instruction, video-based and text-based, and investigated students' opinions on motivation, understanding and retention of course information. Researchers used an opinion questionnaire to ask students' attitudes towards the different leaning tools. Results of their opinion-based study indicate that participants have a more positive attitude towards video-based lessons than text-based lessons, and that students perceived video-based instruction as more effective than text-based for information retention. This research reveals that "information received visually is more memorable" (2005, p. 225). The study shows no significant differences in understanding and in motivation except for perception of attention. Video-based instruction is considered more effective in influencing attention positively.

2 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND RQS

This research aims to investigate the effects of employing cultural content-video material in the CFL classroom. In particular, our objective is to observe whether video-based instruction affects students' FL cultural understanding, motivation, and finally to observe students' attitudes towards the use of different teaching tools. To this purpose we compare students' perceptions and beliefs of video-based and text-based instruction, and students' cultural retention after having received instruction using both video-based and text-based instruction.

The research aims to answer the following questions:

- (1) Which teaching instruction, video-based and text-based, is more effective for presenting Chinese cultural content in the Chinese FL classroom?
- (2) Which teaching instruction, video-based and text-based, is more successful in increasing learning motivation in the Chinese FL classroom?
- (3) What are student's beliefs of the effectiveness of different teaching tools, video and text, in the study of cultural contents?

(4) How does video-based instruction affect learning results in terms of cultural retention?

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

In order to answer RQs the research method developed the following phases: creation of teaching material and questionnaires, selection of informants, data collection and analysis of results. In order to observe the effects of the use of video compared to the use of text when teaching culture, the same input was used to prepare teaching material, employing two different tools.

Informants were divided in two groups: Group 1 was exposed to video-based instruction, and Group 2 or control group to text-based instruction.

To collect data two opinion questionnaires were used. A pre-questionnaire on perception of Chinese culture and motivation for studying Chinese language and culture was given to all participants. (§ 3.3). Students then took part in two taught lessons of three hours each, each group receiving different instructions video-based or text-based instruction (§ 3.4). Later on, after instruction was completed, the participants of each group were asked to complete a post-questionnaire. The post-questionnaire included the same sections on culture perception and motivation as in the pre-questionnaire, a third section on students' opinions of teaching tools and two content questions were added. Retention of cultural information was examined through content questions. Results of questionnaire were then analysed (§ 3.5).

3.2 Informants

Informants included 42 (15 to 16 years) high school Italian mother tongue students. All participants were beginner level students, in their 1st and 2nd year of high school, enrolled in a selective course of Chinese. Since perception of difficulty in learning and understanding Chinese culture is mostly perceived at beginner level

(Gabbianelli & Formica, 2017), such level learners were selected. Furthermore, since generally learners who approach the study of Chinese without any previous knowledge of the language and the efforts needed to achieve it are young students, informants examined were teenagers. 1st and 2nd year students were divided in two groups, and all participants were informed that there was another group of each year enjoying text/video-based instruction.

The investigation was carried out after 30 hours of Chinese course. All informants attended Chinese language lessons with the same Chinese mother tongue lecturer and the same Italian teacher. In both groups, after formal introduction of the Chinese language provided by the Italian teacher, a native lecturer guided students in the communicative use of the structures of the FL. Teachers regularly used both slide presentations and video materials to present teaching content, showing images and language forms.

3.3 Pre- and post-questionnaire

To analyse the effects of employing video in the teaching of culture, two questionnaires were used, both written in Italian: a pre-questionnaire was given to students before the lesson (Appendix A), and a post- questionnaire was given after the teaching practice (Appendix B), results were then compared. Questionnaires were created using Likert-type statements, and only positive items were used. Students were asked to indicate their beliefs and perceptions on a four-point scale of agreement: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The pre-questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A focused on the perception of Chinese culture and presented 7 statements; items A1 and A2 concerned students' perception of cultural distance between L1 and FL; A3 and A4 investigated student's perception of difficulty in understanding Chinese culture; A5 explored difficulty in understanding Chinese culture, compared to the understanding of other foreign cultures. Items A6 and A7, dealt with beliefs about the importance of relationship between culture and language in learning a foreign

language. Section B focused on motivation in learning Chinese and included 3 statements. Students had to express their agreement about enjoyment (B1) and intention to continue learning Chinese (B2). Item B3 was different in the two questionnaires; in the pre-questionnaire, item B3a asked why informants chose to study Chinese, while in the post-questionnaire, item 3Bb investigated beliefs about the role of culture in motivating Chinese learning.

The post-questionnaire included same items from Section A and B of the pre-questionnaire, and new items in Section B and Section C were added. New items in Section B asked whether the cultural material presented in class affected students' interest positively (B4) and students' motivation to further explore Chinese culture with their own research (B5).

Section C focused on students' beliefs about the effectiveness of employing different teaching tools to study cultural contents. It consisted of 8 statements. C1 and C2 explored respectively students' understanding and retention of cultural information. C3 and C4 dealt with students' perception of the effectiveness of different teaching tools to present Chinese culture. Items C5 and C6 asked about students' perception of enjoyment and interest produced by different types of instruction. Item C7 investigated perception of effectiveness of video and text to introduce the relationship between culture and language. Finally, item C8 investigated students' preferences for teaching tools for the study of cultural contents.

The post-survey also included Section D with two content questions that students were asked to complete with data from the input received (Appendix B). Students were asked to write information about the cultural aspects taught in the two lessons: the Chinese school system and traditional Chinese martial arts. Data from Sections A, B and C measure the subjective opinions and intuition of students, while data from D tested objective results in terms of cultural retention.

3.4 Teaching material

Teaching material for two lessons of three hour each was prepared. Such material included: the Chinese school system and traditional Chinese martial arts. Despite the two aspects are not the only ones representative of the Chinese culture, the two contents were selected for two reasons. They are close to the life experiences of the informants, school life is part of the every day life of all the participants and the majority of them directly experienced or received information on the Chinese martial arts. Students spontaneously mentioned the two contents when questioned about their previous knowledge of Chinese culture, during informal conversation with teachers, suggesting that they could represent contents of interest.

The input, both video and textual, were presented using students' L1 and included some Chinese vocabulary related to the cultural content. Video-based instruction consisted of two documentary-videos produced by RAI (Radiotelevisione italiana - Italian public radio and television service), each video lasted 20 minutes. Text-based instruction consisted of two written texts of two pages each. Two written texts were created by the teacher adapting input from Chinese culture books and online resources. Textual input were created on the basis of the same content and comprehensibility presented through the video-input in order to have a text-based input as clear and comprehensible as the video-based input and avoid differences that may be cause of difficulties.

Each lesson developed the following phases: teacher introduced new Chinese vocabulary, giving both groups the same worksheet containing exercises and images of the lesson topic. The input was then presented. Group 1 received the instruction through video, while Group 2 through textual material. Both groups had to complete some comprehension exercises based on the input. The two groups attended the Chinese culture classes based on the same cultural content, the only difference was the teaching tool used to present the cultural input.

3.5 Data analysis

In the Likert-type statements used in the questionnaire, agreement and disagreement correspond to a score: 1 point for strongly disagree, 2 points for disagree, 3 points for agree and 4 points for strongly agree. Score 4 is intended as complete positive (strongly agree) and score 1 as complete negative (strongly disagree). Score 2.5 is considered as an intermediate one, between 1 and 4. The lowest scores, below 2.5, represent negative opinions, while the highest scores, 2.5 to 4, represent positive opinions. Findings of each section are presented in table 1.

4 FINDINGS

Findings are described with reference to the four research questions. In order to find which kind of instruction is most successful for the presentation of FL culture (RQ1), and increasing learning motivation (RQ2), findings are discussed by comparing results of Section A and B of the pre-questionnaire with those of the post-questionnaire, considering the results of Group 1 and Group 2. To examine student's beliefs about the use of video-based instruction and text-based instruction (RQ3), the results of Section C from Group 1 and Group 2 were compared in order to observe how video-based instruction affects students' cultural retention (RQ4). Finally, Group 1 and Group 2 results of two open questions were compared. A comprehensive descriptive analysis of results is set out in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of the statements about beliefs and perceptions of using video-based instruction and text-based instruction in Chinese language learning.

Items	Mean		
Section A. Perception of FL culture	Pre-questionnaire	Post-questionnaire	Post-questionnaire
	All students	Group 1 Video instruction	Group 2 Text instruction
A1. I believe that Chinese culture is very distant from my culture of origin.	3.21	3.33	3.15

(continue)

Items	Mean		
A2. I believe that there is a greater difference between my culture of origin and Chinese than there is in the case of cultural systems of other languages that I'm currently learning at school.	3.02	3.14	2.95
A3. I think that the differences between Chinese and my origin culture make Chinese language learning more difficult.	2.33	2.00	2.05
A4. I need more learning aids to understand Chinese culture compared to the ones I need to understand the cultural system of other languages that I'm currently learning at school.	2.85	2.61	2.85
A5. I think that Chinese culture is unfocused and unclear.	2.15	1.76	2.15
A6. I think that Chinese culture is difficult to understand.	2.46	2.38	2.35
A7. I believe that learning the Chinese language is fundamental to understanding Chinese culture.	3.07	3.23	2.75
Section B. Motivation			
B1. I like studying Chinese language and culture.	3.38	3.54	3.10
B2. I want to continue learning Chinese.	2.85	3.00	2.52

(continue)

Items	Mean		
B3a. Why did you choose to learn Chinese? (Open and multiple answers)	57% I am curious 23% I think Chinese is an interesting language 14% I think Chinese is useful for my future 4% I think I can use Chinese for travel or living experiences 2% I think studying Chinese is enjoyable		
B3b. Learning about Chinese culture motivates me to learn Chinese language.	-	3.04	2.65
B4. Video-based/text-based instruction* used in class increased my interest in Chinese culture.	-	3.04	2.80
B5. I will look for other cultural material (video or text*) myself.	-	2.22	2.15
Section C. Effectiveness of teaching tools			
C1. I've clearly understood the Chinese cultural contents we've studied.		3.54	3.10
C2. I clearly remember the Chinese cultural contents we've studied.		2.61	2.60
C3. Video-based/ text-based instruction* has helped me to perceive the Chinese culture as closer and more familiar.	-	3.54	2.87
C4. Video-based/ text-based instruction* has helped me to clearly understand the Chinese cultural contents we've studied.	-	3.13	2.92
C5. I enjoyed learning Chinese cultural contents through video/ text*.	-	3.22	2.71

(continue)

Items	Mean		
C6. I would have preferred to study Chinese culture with other teaching tools.	-	1.50	2.33
C7. Studying cultural contents (video/text*) help me to better understand the Chinese language system.	-	2.72	2.85
C8. List in order of importance the teaching aids used during Chinese classes that you consider most helpful in learning and understanding Chinese culture.	Results in Figure 1		
Section D. Content questions 1. Write what you remember about the Chinese school system you have studied in class (E.g. values of education in China, role of teachers and students, memorization, etc....) 2. Write what you remember about the Chinese martial arts you have studied in class (E.g. origins and values of Chinese martial arts, relation between nature and martial arts, differences from other sports you know, etc. ...)			
<i>Criteria</i>			
Contents accuracy		2.8/3	2.4/3
Language accuracy		2.0/3	2.2/3
Completeness		2.3/4	1.9/4
Average scores		7.1/10	6.5/10

* Only one option was presented in the questionnaire for each group.

4.1 Perception of FL culture

Findings of items A1 and A2 indicate that students who received video-based instruction, Group 1, agreed that Chinese culture is distant from L1 culture (3.33) and from other foreign language cultures (3.14) while the students who received text-based instruction, Group 2 expressed less agreement (3.15 and 2.95). However, the findings of the following items indicate that cultural distance is not perceived as an obstacle to the learning process. The perception of difficulty declared in pre-questionnaire (2.33) decreased when introducing text-based instruction (2.05) and decreased even more with video-based instruction (2.00). Furthermore, Group 1 agreement about the need for additional teaching aids to understand Chinese culture (2.61) is lower than the agreement in pre-questionnaire (2.85), while it is the same for Group 2. In particular, students in Group 1 don't agree with the statement "I think that Chinese culture is unfocused and unclear" (1.75), while, as in the previous statement, Group 2 results are the same as the pre-questionnaire results (2.15). These findings indicate that using video to introduce cultural content increases students' perception of clarity and understanding, and that such a tool is more effective than text.

In item A6, both groups achieved a lower score than in the pre-questionnaire: this finding indicates that receiving cultural instruction reduces perception of the difficulty of understanding culture. This is also confirmed by results of the statement A7: "learning Chinese is fundamental to understanding Chinese culture", where video-based instruction is perceived as more effective (3.23).

4.2 Motivation

Although both groups agreed on statement B1 "I like studying Chinese language and culture", Group 1 agreed more strongly (3.54) than control group (3.10), which achieved a score even lower than that in the pre-questionnaire (3.38). The same situation appears in results of statement B2 "I want to continue learning Chinese", where students who received video-based instruction declared they were more motivated (3.00) than students who received traditional text-based instruction

(2.52), among whom there was less agreement than that declared in the pre-questionnaire (2.85).

In the pre-questionnaire, open question B3a asked participants why did you choose to learn Chinese? The multiple answers indicate that more than 50% of informants decided to study Chinese out of curiosity (57%). This finding confirms that the majority of high school learners approach the study of Chinese FL without any previous knowledge of the language (Gabbianelli & Formica, 2017). 23% of participants declared they believe that Chinese is interesting, and 2% believe that Chinese is an enjoyable language. Only a few informants indicated instrumental motivation, practical reasons for learning Chinese such as: “it is useful for my future” (14%) or “for travelling or living experiences” (4%).

Items from B3b to B5 only appeared in the post-questionnaire. Although both groups agreed that cultural material motivated their learning process and increased their interest in the study, the scores for Group 1 (3,04 and 3,04) are higher than those of Group 2 (2,65 and 2,80). With reference to the intention of conducting individual study (B5), neither of the two groups reached a level of agreement (Group 1= 2.22 <2.50 and Group 2 =2.15 <2.5), however, text-based once more appears less effective than video-based instruction.

4.3 Beliefs in effectiveness of teaching tools

Section C reports results of students' beliefs about video-based and text-based instruction. This section was included only in the post-questionnaire. Overall, results in Group 1 are higher than those in Group 2. This shows that according to participants' perception, video-based instruction is perceived as more effective for learning culture. In particular, a video tool (3.54) is perceived to be more useful than a written text (3.10) when cultural contents are presented, and also more effective (3.54) than texts (2.87) helping students familiarise with Chinese culture. Students strongly agreed that video-based instruction helped them to understand FL culture (3.13), while written texts were perceived as less successful (2.92).

An interesting finding is shown in item C5 where Group 1 declared a strong

agreement with the statement “I enjoyed learning Chinese cultural contents through video/text” (3.22), which is lower for group 2 (2.71).

The two groups showed the same level of agreement in item C2. All informants declared similar perceptions of remembering cultural contents presented using the different teaching tools. This finding shows that students do not believe that the retention of information is aided more effectively by one teaching tool rather than the other.

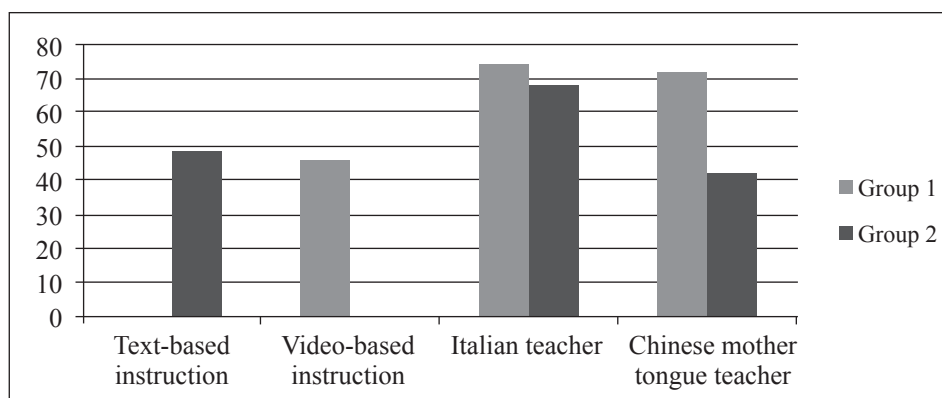
Students of Group 1 don't agree with the statement: “I would have preferred to study Chinese culture with other teaching tools” (1.50). This finding suggests that participants who received video instruction are satisfied with the teaching method and do not need any change. On the other hand, the result of Group 2 comes close to this result ($2.33 < 2.50$), indicating that students who received textual instruction would prefer other teaching tools.

Item C7 refers to students' perception of the relationship between culture and language. Both groups agreed that cultural material is helpful in better understanding Chinese language, however Group 2 is more confident (2.85) than Group 1 (2.72). This result suggests that textual information is still perceived as more effective for learning Chinese. Previous researches have demonstrated that writing is perceived as one of the most difficult skills for learners of Chinese (Gabbianelli & Formica, 2017; Yang & Medwell, 2017) and Chinese teaching generally focuses on writing practice to memorize characters. It is therefore not surprising that written text is perceived a more effective for understanding the Chinese language system.

Figure 1 shows the result of item C8. Data suggest some interesting differences between the two groups about what students consider helpful in their learning process. Group 1 rated Italian teacher and mother tongue teacher as more important than video material in learning cultural content. Group 2 rated only the Italian teacher as more helpful than the written text. These findings reveal that informants who approached the cultural content with video-based instruction are more inclined to recognize active users of language, teachers in this study, as important in the learning process. Differently, students who received traditional

textual instruction remain more engaged with written text and have difficulty in recognizing the importance of active participants in language learning.

Figure 1: Beliefs concerning the role of tools and teacher in the learning process.



4.4 Content comprehension

Section D consisted of two open questions. The results of this section were obtained by applying three criteria to evaluate answers: (1) contents accuracy: this assesses precision of contents written in the answer; (2) language accuracy: evaluating the use of the right lexis in the Italian response and the inclusion of Chinese words, including pinyin; (3) completeness: this considers how much content the answers contain, based on given input. Each criterion corresponds to a maximum score of 3 points for content accuracy, 3 points for language accuracy, and 4 points for completeness, for a total of 10 points.

As shown in Table 1, although both groups achieved a final score above the sufficiency level, students who received video-based instruction (Group 1=7.1) performed better than those who received text-based instruction (Group 2= 6.5). Group 1 achieved higher scores in content accuracy (2.8/3) and completeness (2.3/4). The answers of students who received video-based instruction were more detailed and complete, while the answers of the control group were inaccurate and imprecise and contents were missing. These findings indicate that video-based instruction is more helpful than text-based in providing both detailed information

and general overview of contents.

However, the control group performed better in language accuracy (2.2/3). Only informants from Group 2 included Chinese words, using pinyin, in their answers. This finding shows the importance of written text as a tool for improving language performance. It also supports the finding of statement C7, where informants who received textual material felt more confident in understanding the Chinese language system than informants who received video material.

5 DISCUSSION

Since the perception of distance between the L1 and FL cultures may produce the perception of difficulty in learning Chinese, it is important, on one hand, to introduce cultural content clearly and, on the other hand, investigate students' beliefs about different learning tools to be used to teach culture in the FL context. The findings of Section A provide an answer to RQ1 "which teaching instruction, video-based and text-based, is more effective for presenting Chinese cultural content in the Chinese FL classroom?". Results of informants' perceptions show that video-based instruction confirms the opinion that Chinese culture is very distant from students' culture of origin. Both video-based and text-based instruction reduce the perception that culture is difficult to understand, but video is more effective than written text. Video-based instruction also increases perception of the relationship between culture and language, making learners aware of the important role of culture in language learning. Furthermore, video-based is more effective than text-based instruction in increasing a sense of clarity in the cultural content presented, as observed by previous researches (Herron et al., 2000; Herron & Hanley, 2002). These findings also confer an important pedagogical advantage on the video.

Since it is widely agreed that motivation in language learning is very important, RQ2 intended to investigate whether video-based is more helpful than traditional text-based instruction in increasing motivation in FL Chinese programmes. Results of Section B show that video-based instruction is more

motivating than textual material. Moreover, data from this study show that video-based instruction is more effective in encouraging students to continue their study. While the use of video increases students' interest in acquiring Chinese culture and language, traditional written texts used to introduce culture reduce students' interest. This indicates that video is an effective teaching tool to promote motivation in FL Chinese learning which should be integrated in teaching programmes (Wen, 2011; Tan *et al.*, 2016; Wen, 2018).

The goal of RQ3 was to investigate student's beliefs about the effectiveness of teaching tools in introducing cultural contents. The results of Section C indicate that according to students' perception video is more effective than written text in explaining cultural content, and it is also perceived as a teaching tool that enhances enjoyment and interest in learning. These results show the potential of video for motivation, and to help students' understanding of the context (Chapple & Curtis, 2000). Video-based instruction is considered a suitable tool to teach culture; in fact, students feel satisfied on receiving video instruction and don't feel the need to receive information using different tools. Students' attitude towards video-based instruction in this study is more positive than their attitude towards text-based instruction. As observed by Zhang (2013), providing learners with video-instruction experience, "improved their attitudes towards the use of film as a tool in language learning" (2013, p. 13).

The last part of the questionnaire was dedicated to investigating what kind of instruction supports students' cultural retention best. Results of Section D revealed that video-based instruction supports learning results better than text-based instruction. Video-instruction is more effective in terms of content accuracy; it helps students to clearly understand cultural information. This data is also evident in results of item A5, where students perceived video-based instruction as more effective for introducing cultural elements. Video is also more successful than textual material in terms of cultural retention (Herron & Hanley, 1992; Hanley, Herron, & Cole, 1995). Although students don't perceive differences in the effect of different tools for information retention (C2), results of content questions

reveal that video instruction is more successful. Students who received video-based instruction performed more comprehensively than the control group, which provided less complete answers. These results are in accordance with the findings of Choi and Johnson's study (2005): visual material is more memorable and more helpful in terms of cultural retention. Our study not only confirms this perception, but also demonstrates the effectiveness of video-based instruction in learners' performance. In contrast, traditional text-based instruction is more successful in achieving language accuracy, showing that written text is still a fundamental element in teaching and confirming students' perception of the importance of textual information (C7) compared to video for the learning of Chinese.

Finally, data reveal that using video increases the perception of the importance of mother-tongue teachers, who are the enablers in language interaction. From the point of view of the communicative approach teaching FL for use in a real life context, video-based instruction plays a key role, since it enhances the reasons for communicating.

6 CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

The use of video is recognised to be more effective than traditional textual instruction in teaching language skills, as listening and speaking. This study addresses the importance of cultural teaching in a FL classroom and shows that video-based instruction of cultural teaching is also more effective than text-based instruction. The research presents the potential of video as a tool to introduce cultural contents in the Chinese FL classroom in Italy. In order to facilitate the approach to the Chinese background and to support the learning process we investigated students' attitudes to and preferences for approaching Chinese culture using two different teaching tools: video and text. The findings of this study confirm that video-based instruction is perceived as more effective and more motivating than written text. Moreover, video-based material is more successful in facilitating understanding of a foreign culture and helps enhancement of students' cultural proficiency.

The findings of the present study contribute to the research on the effectiveness of the employment of video as a teaching tool (Choi & Johnson, 2005; Herron et al., 2006), focusing on the specific field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language (Wang, 2008; Zhang, 2013; Wen, 2018). The results support teachers to not only rely on traditional text-based material but to integrate the teaching activities with the use of videos. Moreover, the present study provides useful data for textbooks authors, which could consider the addition of video-based instructions as effective tools for promoting language acquisition in the new teaching materials. Video becomes an indispensable teaching tool in the FL teaching context taking into account, on one hand, the potential it offers to explore the FL culture and, on the other, the fact that young students are more familiar with visual devices than ever before. FL Chinese textbooks published recently in Italy (Masini et al., 2017) include video material to support the language lesson. However, should teachers consider such material inadequate, they can adapt video tools to students' needs. Concluding, the author recommends the inclusion of video-based instruction in FL Chinese teaching to support students' learning and interest and to facilitate the retention of cultural information.

This research also has some limitations. The study was carried out taking into account the results of few hours of cultural lessons. This short period may not have given students the opportunity to get used to the teaching methods. It is possible therefore that introducing cultural content cyclically using two different tools can produce different results. Further studies should be conducted with observation over a longer period. Another limitation is that only retention of cultural contents was examined. Employing video-base instruction in the FL Chinese classroom to introduce culture together with linguistic objectives may provide useful clues for cultural retention as well as for the development of language skills. Furthermore, the study investigates the situation of Chinese cultural learning and teaching in one country; future studies could investigate the learning situation in different areas, in order to better contributes to language and cultural teaching research.

APPENDIX A - PRE- QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

Personal information

Age Gender M F Mother tongue

Please rate the level you agree with the following statements by choosing from 1 to 4 on the scale. (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, (4) strongly agree.

	Section A – perception of Chinese culture	1	2	3	4
A.1	I believe that Chinese culture is very distant from my culture of origin.				
A.2	I believe that there is a greater difference between my culture of origin and Chinese than there is in the case of cultural systems of other languages that I'm currently learning at school.				
A.3	I think that the differences between Chinese and my origin culture make Chinese language learning more difficult.				
A.4	I need more learning aids to understand Chinese culture compared to the ones I need to understand the cultural system of other languages that I'm currently learning at school.				
A.5	I think that Chinese culture is unfocused and unclear.				
A.6	I think that Chinese culture is difficult to understand.				
A.7	I believe that learning the Chinese language is fundamental to understanding Chinese culture.				
	Section B – motivation				
B.1	I like studying Chinese language and culture.				
B.2	I want to continue learning Chinese.				
B.3a	Why did you choose to learn Chinese? (write your answers)				

APPENDIX B - POST-QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

Personal information

Age Gender M F Mother tongue

Please rate the level you agree with the following statements by choosing from 1 to 4 on the scale. (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, (4) strongly agree.

	Sezione A – perception of Chinese culture	1	2	3	4
A.1	I believe that Chinese culture is very distant from my culture of origin.				
A.2	I believe that there is a greater difference between my culture of origin and Chinese than there is in the case of cultural systems of other languages that I'm currently learning at school.				
A.3	I think that the differences between Chinese and my origin culture make Chinese language learning more difficult.				
A.4	I need more learning aids to understand Chinese culture compared to the ones I need to understand the cultural system of other languages that I'm currently learning at school.				
A.5	I think that Chinese culture is unfocused and unclear.				
A.6	I think that Chinese culture is difficult to understand.				
A.7	I believe that learning the Chinese language is fundamental to understanding Chinese culture.				
	Sezione B – motivation				
B.1	I like studying Chinese language and culture.				

(continue)

B.2	I want to continue learning Chinese.				
B.3b	Learning about Chinese culture motivates me to learn Chinese language.				
B.4	Video-based/text-based instruction* used in class increased my interest in Chinese culture.				
B.5	I will look for other cultural material (video or text*) myself.				

	Sezione C – teaching tools				
C.1	I've clearly understood the Chinese cultural contents we've studied.				
C.2	I clearly remember the Chinese cultural contents we've studied.				
C.3	Video-based/ text-based instruction* has helped me to perceive the Chinese culture as closer and more familiar.				
C.4	Video-based/ text-based instruction* has helped me to clearly understand the Chinese cultural contents we've studied.				
C.5	I enjoyed learning Chinese cultural contents through video/ text*.				
C.6	I would have preferred to study Chinese culture with other teaching tools.				
C.7	Studying cultural contents (video/text*) help me to better understand the Chinese language system.				
C.8m	<p>List in order of importance the following teaching aids used during Chinese classes that you consider most helpful in learning and understanding Chinese culture. (1) the most helpful (4) the less helpful.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> video-based material * <input type="checkbox"/> text-based material * *</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Italian teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese mother tongue teacher</p> <p>1. _____ 2. _____</p> <p>3. _____ 4. _____</p>				

*This choice was presented in the Group 1 questionnaire only. ** This choice was presented in the Group 2 questionnaire, control group only.

Section D

Complete

1. The Chinese school system

Write what you remember about the Chinese school system you have studied in class (E.g. Values of education in China, role of teachers and students, memorization, etc....)

2. Chinese martial arts

Write what you remember about the Chinese martial arts you have studied in class (E.g. Origins and values of martial arts, relation between nature and martial arts, differences from other sports you know, etc. ...)

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在汉语作为外语教学课堂里利用视频教学以及 学生对文化理解和学习动机的评价

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摘要

本文个案研究了视频和文本教学在汉语作为外语教学课堂里对学生文化理解和学习动机的看法的影响。它探讨了学生对利用不同的教学工具（包括视频和文本材料）的看法以及它们对保留文化知识的效果。

本研究包括 42 名意大利高中对外汉语的学生。一组学生接受了基于视频的教学，而另一组学生接受了基于文字的教学。该研究通过实验班前问卷结果以及实验班后问卷结果收集数据，调查学生对文化理解、学习动机和学习工具有效性的评估，而比较两组的结果。

研究结果证实了基于视频的教学被认为是比基于文本的教学更有效、更有激励性。视频材料对促进外国文化理解与帮助学生提高文化理解能力更有效。

该研究的结果，一方面有助于汉语作为外语教学领域利用视频作为教学工具的有效性研究。另一方面，带动老师和教材作者把视频教材作为促进语言习得的工具纳入课堂活动与教材。

关键词：汉语作为外语教学 对外教学 学习动机 文化教学 视频教学